CHRISTIAN AUTO-SUGGESTION

R. E. ROBERTS

P3
(7

CHRISTIAN AUTO-SUGGESTION

CHRISTIAN AUTO-SUGGESTION

By R. E. ROBERTS
M.A., HON. C.F.

CANON PRECENTOR OF THE PRO-CATHEDRAL
LEICESTER

LONDON
SOCIETY FOR PROMOTING
CHRISTIAN KNOWLEDGE
NEW YORK AND TORONTO: THE MACMILLAN CO.
1923

To

MY WIFE

my strength in trouble ; my joy at all times

PREFACE

HIS little book is the result of a personal experience. After suffering for some time from insomnia and its nervous accompaniments, I was ordered to suspend my work at a time when such a change caused great inconvenience in the diocese. This added to my distress.

My attention was then drawn to Emile Coué's system of Auto-suggestion, and after reading nearly all available literature on the subject I began with my doctor's approval to practise it in a Christian form. I am very desirous to avoid exaggeration, but I cannot say less than that the practice has been an invaluable help to me physically and spiritually. I can enter fully into the appreciation expressed by the Vice-Provost of Eton in his little book, 'Emile Coué, the Man and his Work.' My earnest wish now is to help others.

Two things ought to be said here: (1) M. Coué from the point of view of a suggester concerned only with the success of Auto-suggestion wholly approves of the process being Christianised by those holding Christian convictions. (2) Auto-suggestion is effective in a far wider sphere than that of nervous complaints. Indeed, the old isolating lines drawn between nervous and functional and organic maladies are fast disappearing, and it is increasingly recognised that nervous disorders soon affect functional and organic parts of the body, whilst functional and organic disorders inevitably affect the nervous system. The scope for effective Auto-suggestion is therefore not so limited as is often supposed.

Besides, there are thousands of people who without being professedly ill are living under physical and

temperamental disadvantages. Professional and business men are not uncommonly harassed by the onus of responsibility; many working men are worried by a variety of unwelcome circumstances; and women in all grades of society silently suffer more than we know. The faithful practice of Christian Auto-suggestion would bring to them all the sunshine of peace and confidence.

As a science the Power of Thought is in its infancy, but it is certain to advance, and it is highly probable that in a generation or two conscious Auto-suggestion will be an important element in our educational and reformatory systems. I feel strongly that the Church will make a grave mistake if she holds aloof from this beneficent movement and leaves it wholly in secular hands. Already many who are admittedly above the average in intelligence and spirituality have left the Church and attached themselves to unorthodox cults because she has neglected some important aspect of the truth. There never was a more characteristically Christian work than that to which the system of Auto-suggestion is now being applied.

A little time ago a young man of some intellectual pretension said to me at a dinner-party: 'Christianity fails because it is presented as a packet of dogmas and not as a philosophy of life.' Whatever criticism may be directed against this booklet, it does present a philosophy of life, and *life at its hardest*.

I hope too that these chapters, few and simple though they be, may do something to further that co-operation between the Church and the Medical Profession which is one of the needs of our day. Science is now making it clear that the priest and the doctor are complementary to each other, and that they ought to unite in rendering their

respective services for the protection and uplift of human life. Christianity, the Religion of the Incarnation of the Son of God, recognises and blends into harmony the material and spiritual elements of the universe.

I thank my colleague, Canon Thompson Elliott, for kindly reading the chapters in manuscript, and for his helpful comments thereon.

R. E. R.

S. DAVID'S DAY, 1923

CONTENTS

		PAGE
	PREFACE	7
I.	GOD	13
II.	MAN	22
III.	FAITH	31
IV.	PRAYER	42
V.	JOY	50
	DAILY THOUGHTS FOR AUTO-SUGGESTION	59

GOD

IN the sphere of religion the first necessity is to know God as He really is. People with strong prejudices are apt to fashion God after their own image. Instead of beginning with ourselves, let us begin with Him and observe that He is revealed to us as Goodness, Truth, and Beauty, all of course permeated with Love. We believe Him to be what His name signifies—The Good One. Before we can trust Him or pray to Him we must conceive Him to be perfectly holy and righteous. That is why 'Hallowed be Thy Name' is the first petition in the Lord's Prayer. We could not wish His Kingdom to come nor His will to be done unless we were utterly convinced of the goodness of His character. He is also Truth; His whole heart is directed towards right and equity. And no less is He Beauty, a fact to which the world around us bears witness, for it partakes inevitably as do all works of art of the character of its Author. Wherever we meet Goodness, Truth, or Beauty, be it within or without the confines of institutional Christianity, God has inspired it, and we ought to welcome it as His gift.

These attributes are our key to the character of God and enable us to know His will. There is at the present time urgent need for a closely studied interpretation of the Divine will, for owing to the sentimental waywardness of human thought, it has become associated in the minds of many not with light and life and health, but with affliction and tragedy and death. Few have consciously connected God's will with the discovery and use of wireless telegraphy which has been the means of saving thousands of lives on the high seas; but when

the *Titanic* was sunk by an iceberg and 1,500 lives were lost, the tragedy was described in the Press as 'an act of God.' I suspect that this phrase, 'an act of God,' is sometimes used in the legal profession. If that be so, I would with great respect suggest to those who have influence in such matters that it be superseded by a less personal and more accurate expression. But the same notion extends far beyond the Press and the Law. A child dies of typhoid fever, and on its gravestone is inscribed 'Thy will be done.' This is true only in a limited sense. Providence has ordained that unclean conditions should lead to disease; but bad drainage cannot be in accord with the Divine will; it is one of the works of the devil that 'the Son of God came to destroy' (1 S. John iii. 8). It is sad that some of the hymns we sing in church at least suggest the same erroneous idea, and that several of the devotional books we clergy use in visiting the sick are burdened with similar language. One typical reading I recall begins with this bald statement: 'God has laid you on this bed of sickness'; and many of the prayers for recovery are so heavily conditioned by such phrases as 'if it be Thy will,' that they give the impression of being half-hearted. There is a sense in which such language may be rightly used, as of course it was by our Lord in Gethsemane; but it has become a habit of many religious minds to make it include too much. We need to recognise quite definitely that God does not deliberately inflict pain upon people, and that His ultimate will for them is health. A simple illustration may help to make this clear provided it is not pressed to illustrate anything beyond the point we are considering. My younger girl, aged four, plays in the garden, falls, and injures her knees. I should resent being told by an interested

observer that I had cut her knees. I would not wilfully hurt the darling for worlds, yet I think it well for her to have freedom and run risks. The prevalence of pain is the measure of the power of Satan in the world, and its diminution was described by our Lord as a manifestation of the works of God (S. John ix. 3). We may be sure, then, that the forces of Heaven are on the side of those who, by the science of surgery, medicine, and psychology, are checking its advance and beating it back. It will be remembered how our Lord described a certain woman afflicted with a malady like rheumatoid arthritis as having been 'bound by *Satan* these eighteen years' (S. Luke xiii. 16), and how He made the husbandman who saw tares among the wheat exclaim: 'An *enemy* hath done this' (S. Matthew xiii. 28). S. Peter stated in a sermon that Jesus of Nazareth went about 'healing all that were oppressed of the *devil*' (Acts x. 38). It is clear then that the will of God as revealed in the work and teaching of Jesus Christ is the goodness, health, happiness, and efficiency of His creatures. He worked to relieve them of physical afflictions, and showed a real concern for the bodies as well as the souls of men. We do well to study the social and remedial implications of His attitude. As Dr. Percy Dearmer says in 'Body and Soul': 'God is the author of health, and the spreading of His power is the quenching of sickness.'

Moreover, it is one of the most distinctive features of Christianity that God, in the person of Jesus Christ, submitted to sorrow and suffering. He is no mere distant King ruling the world in splendour far removed from the toils and travails of men. He is Himself acquainted with grief, and we *know* that He has therefore a perfect understanding of human afflictions. In a

world that has been wet with tears these last ten years, this fact has made God accessible and intelligible to thousands who could otherwise have found no help or peace in Him.

We observe further that in all the work and teaching by which He was revealing God to men, our Lord employed in the main the method of *suggestion*. He hardly ever argued with people, but chose rather to give His hearers an idea clothed in such a way as to appeal to their imagination, and then left it to sink gradually into their hearts. The parables are a series of lessons conveyed by suggestion. Even in the miracles suggestion plays a considerable part: the deaf mute was given the opportunity to feel the Divine fingers on his tongue and in his ears; the man with the withered hand was told to stand up and then to stretch forth his hand; the blind man at Bethsaida had his eyes moistened with saliva. These actions were concessions to the patients and helped to enhance their faith; and this was necessary because faith was, and always must be, an essential factor in the process of healing.

Now, it seems clear that our blessed Lord did not regard the healings He wrought as unique and never to be repeated; on the contrary, He anticipated their continuance by His followers in subsequent ages. When He sent out the disciples into the world He definitely told them to heal the sick (S. Mark vi. 7, 13). He was surprised and disappointed on another occasion when they failed to do so: 'O faithless generation' (S. Mark ix. 18, 19); and looking far ahead into the future when His followers would have grown in faith and power, He predicted they would do even greater things than He Himself had done (S. John xiv. 12). There can

therefore be no doubt that it is the duty of every generation, and particularly of the Church, to perpetuate His beneficent work, and to rely increasingly as He did on the power of suggestion and faith. So far from losing in impressiveness, His 'miracles' surely gain if they were, as I believe, the initiation of a great and progressive movement. The early Church, it is certain, regarded them as such, and felt impelled to follow His example of healing as a normal part of its ministration. S. Paul repeatedly refers to healing as one of the activities of the Church like evangelising and teaching, having its own specially endowed ministers (1 Corinthians xii. 7–11). Indeed prayer over sick people and anointing with holy oil, with expectation that healing would follow, continued without a break during the first seven centuries of our era, and there is evidence of similar treatment and expectation in the eighth and tenth centuries. But gradually the custom became less general, and for the last four centuries the Church of England has largely neglected the subject. It is one of the best signs of modern times that by various means we are feeling our way towards reviving this ancient and Christ-like work.

I do not dwell at this stage on the function of Faith in the process of healing, for so important a subject requires a chapter to itself. For the present we confine our attention to the fact that suggestion, which played so large a part in our Lord's healing and discourses, is being adopted increasingly to-day by educationists, psychologists, and medical doctors. This is due to the rediscovery that it is a means of making a deep impression upon the unconscious mind, and consequently, as we shall presently see, has very far-reaching effects. We may deal effectively with the conscious mind by

argument, but we affect the unconscious mind most readily by suggestion ; and the unconscious mind is much the more potent of the two. Suggestions are double-edged weapons, and may be used for evil as well as for good purposes. Some tend to produce physical ailments and immoral habits. More harm is done than we know of through the reading of tainted stories and morbid press reports. A mother who had discovered suspicious-looking French literature in the secret keeping of her son once asked me to have a quiet talk with him, and our subsequent conversation revealed to what an extent his ideas had been corrupted and poisoned. Another apparently hardy young man of the world confessed to me that after eagerly reading detailed accounts of a grim trial for murder, he more than once woke up at night in a cold sweat and with horrible imaginings. Sir Malcolm Morris, the eminent medical specialist, once told me that a friend of his died within a few hours of being informed by his foolish doctor that he was afflicted with a disease that often resulted in a sudden collapse. I dislike relating these facts, but do so in the hope they may serve as danger-signals. When we tell people they look ill ; when we anticipate the worst possibilities ; when we talk to invalids about their complaints and just commiserate them ; when we speak in the presence of children about subjects which incite fear and dread, we do a real dis-service and our conduct is reprehensible. I am not a frequent patron of cinema shows, but on the few occasions I have attended them I have been appalled by the tragic and melancholy incidents represented on the screen. Secretly but surely they do untold harm, for impressions made upon the mind contribute largely to the formation of character, and are apt to show themselves

long years afterwards. I listened recently to an able address by Mr. Ayscough, General Secretary of the Church of England Temperance Society, on the psychological aspect of the drink-habit, and he proved conclusively that many young people become immoral or drunken in consequence of correspondingly evil suggestions made to them in childhood. In view of such results it is indeed deplorable that so many of our films and novels should dwell on the mawkish and seamy side of life when there is available so much subject-matter that is wholesome and amusing.

Those with whom I share the joy of playing the pre-eminently moral game of golf know how important it is to forget the bunkers, and concentrate on the fair-way. The mere observation of a bunker tends to make us unconsciously direct the ball into it. So in life, if we would go 'straight,' we must concentrate on what is physically and morally healthy. How can we do so in a world that has so many counter-attractions? The Christian answer is, by cultivating the conviction that God's will is the goodness, health, happiness, and efficiency of all His creatures. Having this faith, we shall carry its beneficent and cheering implications to the sick-room and the nursery and wherever we go. In the home, in the school, in the field, in the office, in the factory, we shall do more good than we know by wholesome suggestions. Our words and actions will be as rays of light in dark places; they will set the thoughts of the young in the right direction, and will inspire confidence in the sick and afflicted. *For the tendency of all suggestions is to become auto-suggestions: the thoughts of others are apt to be assimilated by those to whom they are addressed and to produce corresponding effects.* Just as we observed that

suggestions of sickness promote sickness, so suggestions of health promote health. The Dean of Chester has told us in his helpful little book, 'M. Coué and his Gospel of Health,' how he cured Harry John of toothache. He put his fingers on his cheek just opposite the offending tooth, and told the boy to repeat rapidly 'Toothache, go away, go away,' etc., and in a very short time the ache had gone, and smiles replaced tears. I know a masseuse who was requested to treat a lady whose heart frequently 'raced.' The method my friend employed was that of tapping the left breast at precisely the pace the heart ought to beat, and in a very short while the beat was perfectly adapted to the tapping. After repeating this simple operation on several successive days and then at lengthening intervals, the lady's heart became normal. The influence of auto-suggestion extends, as already indicated, to the realm of character. Miss Evelyn Underhill, an acknowledged authority on this subject, has told us that the Christian Mystics of long ago practised what we now call auto-suggestion as a means of advancing in the footsteps of the Master. Those of us who are baptised into the name of Jesus Christ believe that by the power of the Holy Spirit God is within us, and that His presence means protection and power: protection against attacks of the devil, power to advance physically and morally in the right direction. Auto-suggestion as advocated in this little book, and particularly as formulated on the last page, is therefore no innovation, but rather the means of translating into actuality the existing privileges of Holy Baptism; it is the realisation of a gift already in our possession; it is the practical outcome of the indwelling Spirit. Coué speaks repeatedly of the 'immense power within us.' We agree, and proceed a

step further by which we identify 'the immense power' as the gift of God normally bestowed through the channel of an appointed sacrament. We might well reflect then from time to time in some such words as these: 'I am a member of Christ and the child of God. I believe that by the power of the Holy Spirit my Heavenly Father will inspire in me such thoughts as will impel me towards goodness of character and health of body.'

MAN

WE turn our attention to man convinced of two things: God wills his welfare, and gives him power to achieve it. He is endowed with the two-fold nature—spiritual and physical. One of our special needs at the present time is to recognise the close relationship of these two elements. It is generally admitted that in seeking health we have relied too much upon wholly materialistic measures.

Now, Emile Coué does not deny or ignore the physical element in life, nor is he otherwise than appreciative of the service that is rendered by the medical profession. He would have us take material precaution for the preservation of health, and is especially insistent on the necessity of thoroughly masticating our food as a means of avoiding such ailments as indigestion, gout, rheumatism, and constipation. It is, however, a notable feature of Coué and his disciples that they believe there is a power within man without the co-operation of which medicine and other material applications can have no appreciable effect, and that in some cases the only remedy is a new mental outlook. It is comforting to find this conviction shared by the great majority of doctors. Indeed, people are increasingly coming to recognise that *thought* is more potent than pills for the purpose of restoring health. The power of thought over the body is obvious, for have we not seen a maiden blush, or a man's limbs tremble when he speaks in public? And there is the striking fact that whereas a man can walk with comfort a foot-wide plank laid on the solid ground, he would probably fall if he tried to do the same when it is solidly supported at a height of fifty feet. The space available is precisely the same, but he thinks it is

difficult at such an altitude, and the thought prevails. It is therefore not surprising, it is indeed natural—in the sense that it is in accord with the law that obtains universally—that thought should affect the health of the body. Just as you will fall from a height if you think you will, so you will fall a victim to disease if you let your mind dwell on disease. The way to avoid sickness is to think healthily, and the most effective means for overcoming a malady is to regain and maintain thoughts of fitness and efficiency. And here I would stress the importance of promptness—based on my own experience. As soon as you find yourself brooding pessimistically over some physical or mental trouble, and before it gets too tight a grip of you, lay hold of the opposite idea, and reassure yourself in some such words as these: 'I have faith in myself because the Holy Spirit is within me, and He will guide and strengthen me.' Dwell upon that truth to the entire exclusion of the other idea.

The supremacy of thought in the sphere of character is no less marked; and as Christians we must be very desirous that here too its power should be rightly directed and utilised. Our blessed Lord in the Sermon on the Mount told His hearers in effect that if they would avoid the guilt of killing they must think kindly; if they would escape the sin of adultery they must think purely. A parish priest is sometimes asked by a young man how he can best cope with temptations to immorality; and the soundest advice that can be given, I believe, is that instead of merely wrestling with evils and thus running the risk of getting entangled in their meshes, he should turn away from them and fill his mind with their opposite, *i.e.*, with wholesome and elevating thoughts. In all these matters, whether of physical health or of moral character, we do

well to accept the good counsel of S. Paul : ' Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good ' (Romans xii, 21).

There is also the person who suffers from attacks of depression because there lies on his conscience the burden of some sin. A private interview not unfrequently brings this fact to light. He has abandoned himself to remorse and cannot shake off the consciousness of wrong. Two things need to be impressed upon him : (1) Instead of brooding helplessly over his sin, he must repent, which is a very different thing. For repentance is not merely sorrow for this or that evil in the past, or fear of future retribution ; it is a turning of the whole personality to God whose love he has injured, with a complete repudiation of all his sins, and a real transformation of character ; (2) he needs to be assured that granted such a change of heart, God through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ really forgives, *i.e.*, blots out past evils and makes them as though they had never been ; they are thrown into oblivion, and there is a fresh start. Many people find it difficult to be sure and satisfied that they are forgiven, and hence fail to shake off a consciousness of guilt. In such a case it is infinitely worth while to use every available means—such as a suitable adaptation of auto-suggestion—for making the truth of Divine mercy take root in the person's mind (*cp.* S. Luke v. 17–26).

We have now to consider how best to make thought effective, for here as elsewhere there are right and wrong methods. The study of psychology has taught us that in a good sense man is double-minded : he has a conscious and unconscious mind. This is not the place, nor indeed am I the man, to enter deeply and minutely into this great subject ; but we can make a few observations

which will help us to practise effectively Christian auto-suggestion. With the conscious mind we are for our purpose sufficiently familiar; but the unconscious mind requires some study. As evidence of its existence we know that when a man is asleep and the conscious mind is dormant, he may walk downstairs, select a certain book in the study, take it to bed with him, and wonder in the morning how he became possessed of it. Indeed, the unconscious mind may render conspicuous service, as in the case recorded by the late Dean Hole in his 'Memories': 'A claim was repeated after his father's death which had been resisted in his lifetime and retracted by the claimant; but the son was unable to find the letter in which the retraction was made. He dreamed that his father appeared and told him that it was in the left-hand drawer of a certain desk. Having business in London he went up to the offices of his father, an eminent lawyer, but could not discover the desk, until one of the clerks suggested that it might be among some old lumber placed in a room upstairs. There he found the desk and the letter.' The unconscious mind is undoubtedly a great force. In it is recorded every impression we have ever had, and these are factors in the formation of our temperament, outlook, and conduct. Nay more, its influence extends to the physical, and it regulates the whole organism of the body and such functions as digestion and circulation. It is sometimes assumed that mind can affect only the nerves. There is, however, no such restriction. The nerves, it is true, are the first part of the human body to come under its influence, but we observe that they dominate the whole organism. They set in motion the muscles, act upon the heart, regulate the circulation, and dilate or contract the blood-

vessels. Indeed, the nerves which we *know* are susceptible to suggestion, influence all the organs, and therefore serve as an intermediary for reaching whatever part of the body is out of order. This indisputable fact facilitates for many belief in the curative powers of the mind.

Now one of the main features of Emile Coué's teaching is the declaration that we can consciously suggest healthful thoughts to the unconscious mind, and by adopting certain methods persuade it to accept them. Once they are accepted, they become realised in the human organism. What are these methods? A word of warning is first necessary against making an effort. The Bishop of Manchester, by way of illustrating this point in an article on 'Coué and S. Paul' in *The Pilgrim* for October 1922, gave an interesting account of Sir Walford Davies conducting a largely attended singing practice of working people. Sir Walford's main advice to them was to this effect: 'You heard the tune I have just played; now sing and enjoy it. Don't *try* or make an effort, but let yourselves go, and the music will sing itself.' So also with the practice of healthful auto-suggestion. Anything like a struggle must be avoided, for it would only call into action opposing forces. Wholesome auto-suggestion is not a battle but a positive and peaceful process. Do not say: 'I *will* get well,' or 'I *must* get well'; but 'By the power of God I *can* get well, and already I am getting better.' If a malady makes you feel restless and confused at times, isolate yourself, sit comfortably in an arm-chair, close your eyes, and turn your thoughts in the direction of calmness and peace through some such words as these: 'Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed

on Thee' (Isaiah xxvi. 3). Then proceed with faith to gather remedial thoughts like these: 'Jesus my Saviour in all His Healing power is with me. Already the clouds are breaking and the trouble is passing away. I am calmer and better, and will continue to improve. I hear the Divine voice say as of old: "Thy faith hath saved thee."' Some people when suffering from acute pain have found it a great help to repeat rapidly for about one minute, so as not to let the opposite idea have its say: 'It's going, going, going,' etc., finishing with the climax, 'Gone!' These are tried methods of auto-suggestion which have proved themselves effective in very many instances.

But besides these particular suggestions, there is, of course, the general treatment of maladies. Whatever form the disease may take, nervous, functional, or organic, turn your thought away from it and fill the mind with the idea of a healthy condition. Slightly adapting Coué's suggestion, I commend the following practice: Secure a piece of string and tie twenty knots on it. After getting into bed, relax the muscles, make yourself very comfortable in mind and body, close your eyes, and without effort but with faith repeat twenty times (mechanically counted by passing your fingers over the knots): 'Jesus is healing me, body and soul.' Whisper the words smoothly and rhythmically so that you may just hear them. Repeat the process when you wake in the morning. It is when you are drowsy that the unconscious mind is at high tide, and therefore most accessible. Although the formula is general, the unconscious mind may be relied upon to apply the remedy in that part of the body in which it is most needed.

This is an appropriate place to observe that the

unconscious mind of children is especially susceptible to suggestion. If a child is ailing the mother should caress it well, and speak soothingly and confidently of its improvement. Indeed, so sensitive is the unconscious mind of a child that it is a good plan for one of the parents to enter the room when it is asleep, and standing near the head of the bed whisper lovingly over it some such words as these: 'Jesus who healed the sick and loved little children is with you; He is making you better and stronger; the ailment is passing away, and soon you will be quite well. May God guide and bless you all the days of your life.' It is known that this practice is often fruitful of good and successful, and although the method may seem fantastic, it is not after all different in principle from the habit of kissing the bruised forehead, and assuring the little one that 'it is quite well again, now!' Even where there is no ailment a parent would do well nightly to suggest over the sleeping child loving thoughts about the development of its body, mind, and soul.

Now, if this method of auto-suggestion for preventing and healing human ailments were universally adopted, and the desired results were largely realised, what would be the general effect on man? I do not believe we have any right to assert that he would suffer moral loss through a diminution of the particular discipline of disease. We know that suffering often has a wholesome effect; but such a result depends really on the person, not on the incident, and it cannot be denied that a similar result might be produced by another and less painful process. Whatever our estate, be it sickness or health, our true part is to try and turn it to moral and spiritual advantage, and ask God to convert even a calamity into a blessing.

But this is no argument against using every science available to diminish disease. Our Lord Himself gave healing a prominent place in His ministry, and we have already observed how, when about to restore sight to the man born blind, He indicated that one of the redeeming features of physical affliction is that it provides an occasion for the manifestation of the works of God. It is also to be noted that He who sought only to do men good never refused to heal on the ground that the disease if left undisturbed would contribute to the moral and spiritual welfare of the patient. In every one there is an instinct to protect and prolong life ; and it can hardly be doubted that it is a wholesome instinct. There was a strain of something better than levity in Admiral Meux's statement in the House of Commons : ' We all think Heaven a beautiful place, but not even bishops are in a hurry to go there.'

The practice of auto-suggestion would result not only in protecting and extending human life, but also in strengthening human character. ' Self-mastery ' is the title which Coué has adopted for this wonderful enterprise of thought, and a better there could hardly be. By successfully practising auto-suggestion man gains increasing control of himself and of his circumstances. Instead of being tossed about by this and that wave of experience he steers an even course, and like a skilled seaman turns the movements of the waters to good purpose. This masterly direction of thought not only eliminates ailments, but also helps to uplift men to a higher plane of character, whereon they will practise self-discipline *in all respects*, and gain a truer and finer outlook upon the Divine gift of life. On this level the spiritual dominates the material, and personality triumphs

over circumstances. Men differ temperamentally and constitutionally. Some have little need to think of their bodies, and that of course is very comfortable; others would be better in days to come if they took reasonable care to maintain good health; and yet others, particularly emotional and sensitive people, are especially prone to physical ailments and self-concern. So also in the moral sphere. Some are born not far from the top of moral heights; others start with serious disadvantages and have hills to climb and crags to scale before they have brought their wayward tendencies into subjection to the Divine will. But whatever our condition physically and morally, we *all* need to grow in power, and there is not one of us who cannot do so, if he has the apparently paradoxical graces of humility and self-confidence: humility to acknowledge that the power within him is the gift of God; self-confidence to be assured that the gift is real and effectual. Both graces are derived through Jesus Christ. As we follow the story of His life on earth we see how perfectly they were blended in Him, and how by virtue of them He triumphed in all trials and temptations. This supreme and indomitable spirit He offers to man; and man, because he is made in the image of God, can receive and appropriate it. The gift flows freely through the channels of prayer, meditation, and sacrament; but one condition is essential in man before he can effectually partake of it—he must have *faith*. For now as of old the Divine Law holds good: 'According to thy faith be it unto thee.' Endowed and frequently reinforced with the spirit of Jesus we shall not be daunted, much less overcome, by the rough seas of life; for the power within us will enable our personality to dominate every difficulty, and to make us steadfast as a rock.

FAITH

WE all have faith, and exercise it daily in the common routine of life. There is no one who does not act on certain assumptions, and indeed business could not be transacted without the venture of confidence. Bishop Westcott in his 'Historic Faith' says: 'We cannot live without exercising faith. It is perhaps a sad possibility that we can die without it.' In the sphere of religion this same faculty of *trust* carries us beyond what is visible or demonstrated, and enables us to grasp such spiritual realities as the being of God. These realities are absolute in themselves; our faith does not create them; it only enables us to recognise and accept them, and to make them matters of individual conviction. Now, if we consider faith in this sense in connection with health, we shall understand its true function. Objectively our good health exists in the will and purpose of God; it is His desire and design for us. We accept that fact by faith and proceed to make it a reality and matter of experience in ourselves. By faith we *appropriate* the blessing, just as the invalid woman drew virtue out of Jesus Christ into herself (S. Luke viii. 43). When we read the Gospel accounts of the healings wrought by our Lord we are impressed with the important part played therein by faith. 'According to thy faith be it unto thee' (S. Matthew ix. 29). 'Thy faith hath saved thee' (S. Mark v. 34). 'Thy faith hath made thee whole' (S. Mark x. 52). Indeed, where it is not expressly stated that the patient himself or his friends on his behalf had faith, it is invariably implied in the story by such action as coming out to seek and hear our Lord (S. Matthew iv. 24). Most

conclusive of all perhaps is the statement made by S. Mark (vi. 5) and S. Matthew (xiii. 58) that in Nazareth 'He could do no mighty work because of their unbelief.' There is evidence enough, alas! that to-day also many fail to regain health through sheer lack of confidence in God and themselves. Our Lord's own words clearly indicate that the faith of the afflicted was the main agency by which His healing works were wrought. In considering the accounts of the miracles recorded in the Gospels we are apt to dwell on the *power* of the healer almost to the exclusion of such factors as His tender sympathy with the suffering and the tremendous power of faith. 'Had Christ been a mere wonder-worker,' says Dr. Dearmer in 'Body and Soul,' 'seeking to win acceptance by His thaumaturgic powers, He would have laid stress on His own share in these miracles, and have minimised or ignored the share of His patients. He did precisely the opposite, and consequently His doctrine and His methods of healing are what modern knowledge would lead us to expect, and are the best examples to-day for those who would pursue the subject.'

It is evidence of the tenacity of certain traits in human nature that the attitude of many people towards Emile Coué and his healings is like that of His followers towards our blessed Lord. There is the same tendency to 'lionise' the healer, to dwell upon his power, to regard the whole process as a piece of magic. But Coué will have none of it, and rebuts every attempt to magnify his contribution. He excels in the work of healing because he has devoted his life to it, and believes wholeheartedly in his methods; he is a strong personality and has ample confidence in himself. These and other

qualities naturally count for a good deal in the remedial achievements associated with his name; but he is not merely being modest, he is absolutely right in insisting that much more depends on the patient than upon himself or any other suggester. 'It is not in me,' he says, 'but in yourself that you must have confidence, for it is in yourself alone that dwells the force that can cure you. My part simply consists in teaching you how to make use of this force.' This needs to be clearly understood by all who are inclined to the practice of auto-suggestion. It appears so much easier for us to submit to an external power than to take a predominant share in effecting our own cure. The story of Naaman is repeated in the experience of many to this day. 'Behold I thought, he will surely come out to me, and stand, and call on the name of the Lord his God, and wave his hand over the place, and recover the leper.' (2 Kings v. 11). We like to have things done by magic; it saves so much trouble. But it is not to be! Within us, by the power of the Holy Spirit, is the gift of faith. Its measure largely determines our capacity for appropriating health and happiness. If it is but very little, we can increase and intensify it by prayer and practice. Ask God day by day to give it you in larger measure, and use such opportunities as frequently come your way to exercise it. The practice of it is no less necessary than the praying for it. We lose a vast amount of personal power through a fear to launch out on the broad basis of faith. Many think so poorly of it that they shrink from setting it a task of any magnitude. And yet adventure is essential to its life and development. If you suffer physical pain or mental depression, have confidence that you can dominate it, and proceed to do so on the assumption

that by the grace of God you have in yourself the most essential factor for that purpose. It is upon yourself much more than upon anyone else, however eminent the doctor or suggester may be, that the issue depends. Cultivate by thought and action the seed of faith, and it will grow and in due course be strong enough to draw the 'virtue' of healing from a merciful Providence. Believe in yourself and you will accomplish all that is reasonably possible. This is no new theory invented to promote a psychological venture of the twentieth century; it is very, very old. Did not Virgil in describing a hotly contested boat-race remark as he pictured the straining oarsmen: 'They can, because they think they can'? They had faith in themselves, and their achievement was in proportion to it.

Not only is it true that the suggester cannot effect a remedy without the co-operation of the patient's faith, but the patient's faith can effect a remedy without the personal co-operation of a suggester. In his introduction to a helpful book by C. H. Brooks on 'The Practice of Auto-Suggestion,' Emile Coué writes: 'The instructions given (in the following chapters) are amply sufficient to enable anyone to practise auto-suggestion for him or herself without seeking the help of any other person.' We observe then that on the human side faith is the most essential condition for the attainment of healing. The patient must mentally picture himself in a state of health, and believe that by the power of God he is gradually approaching that state. One of the formulas I often reflect upon runs thus: 'I have perfect confidence that by the power of God within me I'm getting stronger in body, mind, and character, and will continue to do so until I'm thoroughly well and stead-

fast.' Two things may be noted here: (1) that the ultimate objective is kept in view, 'thoroughly well and steadfast'; (2) the conviction that there is a steady approach towards it. I wish to avoid arguing in this little book, but here for a moment I must answer a criticism which is frequently levelled at those who practise auto-suggestion, and which does not seem to me to have been sufficiently refuted. There are some who object to this assumption of progress towards recovery on the ground that it is mere bluff and falsehood. (Perhaps the frequent use of the word 'imagination' in auto-suggestion literature has provided some reason for making the charge, for it does suggest something rather remote and fanciful. In these chapters I avoid using the word in this connection, and I have likewise dropped the word 'will.' Instead I use the words 'faith' and 'thought.' In this as yet little explored science there is some doubt as to what words most accurately express certain ideas.) Now, to picture oneself in a state of health as an objective reality, and to believe in an actual advance towards it is not what some contemptuously describe as 'bluff'; on the contrary, experience proves that it answers, and is in fact the initiation of progressive recovery. What is thus actualised must have a firmer foundation than bluff. It is relevant to observe on the other hand that the gravity of a disease is often mentally exaggerated, and that it is the man who despairs of recovery who deludes himself. If the light on the chances of success shine but dimly, it were surely better to bluff ourselves that we are progressing than to bluff ourselves that recovery is impossible. Think of the healing of the ten lepers. They were told to go and show themselves to the priests, *i.e.*, they were to behave as if they had been healed although

there was no sign of it; they were to *assume* the disease would wither away. And it was in the act of thus 'bluffing' themselves that the cure was effected. Truly a profitable assumption and a further example of faith rewarded (S. Luke xvii. 12–19). More will be said about the justification of assuming success when we consider Prayer in the next chapter. Meanwhile we note that whatever objection may be advanced against assuming progress, the fact remains that in every department of life, secular as well as religious, it is the only conviction that yields the results we rightly desire. It is indicative of the widespread interest now taken in this subject, and of the growing conviction that thought is a tremendous practical force, that there appeared in *The Times* a few months ago a leading article on 'Seeing and Believing,' in which the power of spiritual vision was said to be such as to impel men to achieve what would otherwise be quite impossible. It is a true instinct that induces a man to visualise himself at his best, and to believe in an ideal self which beckons him to the elevations whereon it lives. For example, in Holy Baptism you were made through Christ the child of God. You have doubtless often behaved as if you were not; but the fact that you *are* incites you to lift your eyes unto the hills of God and see yourself ideally there. Even in the midst of shortcomings the fact of sonship keeps before you the true conception of what you ought to be, and helps to uplift you towards the level of its privilege. So also in the matter of health. This vision of what Providence wills for you, and of what you are ideally and objectively in His counsel and purpose, puts heart into you to rise above those adverse circumstances which tend to weaken and depress you, and to develop in your-

self the qualities of fitness and efficiency. Therefore is it right and of paramount importance that you should believe in the reality of health, and by a wise direction of thought and conduct seek to maintain what measure you have of it, and to believe that by the help of God you can regain whatever you may have lost.

There is no longer any doubt that such faith is effective, for the evidence is overwhelming. I will quote two cases in which the remedy was achieved by auto-suggestion, the first through Coué's personal assistance. 'M. M——, a working hosier living at Sainte-Savine near Troyes, paralysed for two years as the result of injuries at the junction of the spinal column and the pelvis. The paralysis is only in the lower limbs, in which the circulation of the blood has practically ceased, making them swollen, congested and discoloured. Several treatments, including the anti-syphilitic, have been tried without success. Preliminary experiments successful; suggestion applied by me, and auto-suggestion by the patient for eight days. At the end of this time there is an almost imperceptible but still appreciable movement of the left leg. Renewed suggestion. In eight days the improvement is noticeable. Every week or fortnight there is an increased improvement with progressive lessening of the swelling, and so on. Eleven months afterwards, on November 1, 1906, the patient goes down-stairs alone and walks 800 yards, and in the month of July 1907 goes back to the factory where he has continued to work since that time, with no trace of paralysis.' This is a most encouraging example for three reasons: (1) The trouble was not merely fanciful, but actually physical; (2) The cure was very gradual; (3) The cure was complete and permanent. (Quoted in 'Self-Mastery,' by

Emile Coué.) I choose for the second example a remedy effected by the patient himself, without a suggester: 'For a good many years now a rheumatic right shoulder has made it impossible for me to sleep on my right side, and it seriously affected, and increasingly so, the use of my right arm. A masseuse told me she could effect no permanent improvement as there was granulation of the joints and a lesion. I suddenly realised two days ago that this shoulder no longer troubled me, and that I was sleeping on that side without any pain. I have now lost any sensation of rheumatism in this shoulder, and can get my right arm back as far as the other without the slightest twinge or discomfort. I have not applied any remedy or done anything that could possibly have worked these results except my practice of Coué.' L. S., Sidmouth, Devon, January 1, 1922 (quoted in 'The Practice of Auto-Suggestion,' by C. H. Brooks). Scores of cures effected by prayer and religious suggestion are quoted by Dr. Dearmer in 'Body and Soul'; whilst Bishop Pakenham-Walsh in 'Divine Healing' records that he himself has been the means of fully restoring to health 101 patients, and of greatly improving even more. Indeed, all medical scientists now freely accept as facts mental and spiritual healings. There are to-day thousands of people who owe their physical or mental or moral restoration to the practice of auto-suggestion; and to those who are afflicted and have not yet seriously considered or applied this system comes now the urgent admonition: Suggest to yourself daily the truth and reality of health; fill your mind with the idea of health; have faith that you are increasingly coming into possession of health. The frequent and trustful repetition of this assurance will tend to make it dominate your thoughts to such an

extent that you will later assume it unconsciously and enjoy its wholesome results.

In addition to the observations we have already made, it is important to note at least three things about this process of health development by auto-suggestion.

1. In the early stages especially repetition of the idea through one formula or another is essential. If you see frequently, because you cannot help seeing, an advertisement of Pugh's soap, it is highly probable—unless you belong to that minority in whom such a suggestion only provokes aversion—that when you buy soap you will sooner or later ask for Pugh's, although you may profess to be wholly indifferent to advertisements. The thing has got into your unconscious mind, and comes out at the right moment. In the practice of auto-suggestion it is therefore not surprising that repetition should be strongly advocated.

2. Progress is sometimes slow, especially if auto-suggestion is practised without the aid of a suggester. But Coué states that a gradual cure tends to be more permanent than a sudden one. In the early stages especially there should be fair opportunity to concentrate upon the cure. I know one who after making a promising start lost ground badly because he became engrossed in urgent problems of administration. Above all, however long the process, let there be no flagging of faith.

3. Faith is equal to the gravest occasion if only we have it in abundance, for it is the power of the Holy Spirit within us. The old saying that it removes mountains suggests that it is a force which can accomplish what may seem impossible. If the affliction is of a serious nature, let it be remembered that the number of

'incurable' diseases is steadily diminishing. It is a fact that many hopeless cases have been greatly relieved and improved through the agency of faith and fortitude, and some could be quoted as having been fully restored to health. Emile Coué, with his long and wide experience of patients, says: 'Every illness, whatever it be, *can* yield to auto-suggestion, daring and unlikely as my statement may seem. I do not say *does* always yield, but *can* yield, which is a different thing.'

Frequent repetition of assurances that you are getting better; patience and invincible hope when the remedy is long delayed; indomitable fortitude when the affliction is serious—these are essential conditions for the recovery of health, and will not be lacking in those who have faith in God.

At the risk of repeating myself, let me say that such faith is not acquired in a day. A little reflection on what it really means will convince anyone that it needs cultivating. Faith in God means that our relation to Him is like that of a trustful child to its father or mother; it means that we can, and do, put ourselves unreservedly, day by day and night by night, in His care, and rely upon His protecting love with perfect confidence. Many of us do not reach this blessed state of mind and heart without a good deal of discipline and practice. We need therefore consciously and deliberately to approach our Heavenly Father, and train ourselves to trust Him, so that in trials of whatever sort our confidence will be such that we cannot be shaken. 'This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith' (1 S. John v. 4). I have found the following statements of faith helpful, and my mind dwells upon them as opportunity allows every day:

I have faith in God because He is the All-good and All-sovereign Lord of the world, and has manifested His love for me in Jesus Christ, who cleanses my soul and heals my body.

I have faith in myself, because the Holy Spirit is within me, and He will guide and strengthen me.

PRAYER

IT would be presumptuous to attempt an adequate survey of this great subject in a short chapter. We shall here concern ourselves only with that aspect of it which is strictly relevant to our present purpose. Prayer is not merely petition, but communion with God, the concentration of the whole human personality upon Him and the eternal verities and values which are in Him. This mystical experience, as the Dean of S. Paul's says in a fine passage in 'Outspoken Essays' (2nd Series), 'is the bedrock of religious faith . . . a very different thing from merely saying one's prayers.' Now, Christian auto-suggestion as a means of healing requires such a concentration of mind and heart. So we would infer from our Lord's own words: 'This kind goeth not out save by prayer and fasting' (S. Matthew xvii. 21). If we would dominate our ailments we must ascend the hill of the Lord; if we would be relieved of harassing thoughts we must unite ourselves with the God of peace. This, of course, is done in effect by many who do not share our religious convictions; but it cannot be accomplished by them or by us, at any rate in the initial stages, without securing for the purpose every day some quiet moments, when, as Bishop Stubbs once said, 'the over-heated wheels of perpetual motion may rest and cool, and the dust that settles on the soul amid our manifold occupations may be swept aside.' Besides, we have our Lord's own example of resorting to quiet places in order to commune with God in the silent deeps of the heart. This attitude of quiet repose in which we can most easily receive Him who alone can drive out evils has an essential place in the process of effective auto-

suggestion. Every expert suggester from Coué downwards makes a great point of maintaining calmness and confidence both in himself and in the patient. It would be well, especially for every sufferer 'in mind, body, or estate,' to withdraw from work and society at least once or twice a day, and just quietly direct his thoughts to God and dwell upon Him as the essence of Goodness, Truth, and Beauty, and then of Light and Life, and Health, and in the power of the Holy Spirit enthrone Him as such in the heart.

Prayer then is first and most essentially the concentration of the human soul upon spiritual realities: the communing of man with God. But it is right and natural to include in it less general aspects. The prayerful man will ask for a special measure of wisdom to guide him at some critical stage; he will likewise in sickness ask for restoration to health. We need not shrink from a wholesome ambition in our petitions. Bishop Philips Brooks bade men 'pray for wings, not for crutches.' Unless there is quite obviously no possibility of recovery, a patient and his friends are justified in asking that there may be a steady improvement until the blessing of health is fully restored. Only, and this matters more than all, we must be quite sure that the motive of such prayer is entirely good, and indeed the highest. A man may be granted soundness of body and mind, and then be a blighting influence in the world; or he may remain an invalid and be a great spiritual force and a power for good. We must first put ourselves on God's side in the matter, by seeing that our motive is in full accord with His will; we must not begin by attempting to pull over God to our own side. 'Saved for Service' should be our motto. Once the motive is rightly settled, we ought to

pray for the health of the body as well as for the health of the soul. This has been a somewhat neglected duty for several generations. Bishop Temple, in the article referred to in a previous chapter, says : ' We have mostly excluded the whole bodily side of our nature from our expectation of divine blessing. This is false to the Gospel, and implies a disastrous dualism in our philosophy. There is only one universe, and God is the life of it.'

This expectation of divine blessing upon the material side of our nature is wholly in harmony with our Lord's practice and with Apostolic teaching. The former we have already considered ; as an instance of the latter we recall the words in the fifth chapter of the Epistle of S. James : ' Is any among you suffering ? let him pray. Is any cheerful ? let him sing praise. Is any among you sick ? let him call for the presbyters of the Church ; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the Name of the Lord, and the prayer of faith shall make the sick man whole, and the Lord shall raise him up.' Among many comments which might be made on this passage, we note briefly : (1) The patient is bidden to pray for himself. Instead of merely submitting to sickness as a fatal visitation and just enduring it as a signal of God's will, he is to remember the Great Physician, uplift his thoughts to Him, and seek His aid and healing powers. (2) He is to ask for the prayers of the Church's presbyters, as one who believes in the power of intercession. This effectiveness of fellowship in prayer is reflected to-day in Coué's inclination to favour group rather than individual treatment. Where two or three are gathered together there is created an atmosphere in favour of producing the desired effect. Many of us have

experience of this power which belongs to corporate action or rather thought, for it is undoubtedly one of the many agencies which God uses for the fulfilment of His will. The prayer of one friend for another is often known to be effective. I remember a blind friend telling me when we served together in a hospital in France: 'I'm having a wonderful experience, Padre. On certain nights I make a special point of praying for that young fellow, C.H.; and I've noticed that every morning following the concentration of my thoughts on his behalf, he is decidedly better.' Knowing both men and something of the mystic ways of God I could appreciate what was taking place. Not the least urgent of the Church's needs to-day is an increase in the practice of intercession and a greater sense of fellowship in prayer. (3) There was the anointing with oil; and this instruction by S. James gains in significance from the fact that for many centuries such anointing was the Church's customary treatment of the sick. It is gratifying to find that the practice is now being revived by many parish priests, for there can be no doubt about its value as a *suggestion* as well as an authorised instrument of healing. It is, indeed, in direct line with our Lord's use of external measures for the purpose of impressing the patient. No one with any knowledge of psychology will despise such a practice. (4) We notice the assurance of the effectiveness of prayer: 'the prayer of faith shall make the sick man whole, and the Lord shall raise him up.' S. James, unlike many timid pietists of to-day, assumes that real heartfelt prayer will be the means of bringing to the sick the blessing of health. Such a view of the effectiveness of prayer is surely justified by our Lord's own words: 'all things whatsoever ye pray and ask for, believe that

ye have received them, and ye shall have them' (S. Mark xi. 24). God requires every good and true desire of the heart to be sustained by faith, *i.e.*, by a conviction that it will be granted. The keen evangelist struck the right note when he opened a great mission with these words: 'Let us thank God for what He is going to do!' Timidity and doubt are not the channels through which God gives His richest blessings; they are not calculated to bring down divine gifts. A bishop recently told me that when he was about to be confirmed, his house-master who had prepared the class said to them in a note approaching despair: 'Well, I hope it'll do you good!' Faith and optimism, be they never so blind and illogical, are surely more Christian than doubt and faint-heartedness. So at any rate the New Testament appears to me to teach; and accepting that view of prayer for the sick I have generally exhorted them to be assured that they will be better, that indeed they are already getting better, as a result of our united communion with God. There is then ample justification for the confidence with which auto-suggestion is practised. No human soul has communed with God without being better for it, for God is the source of life and health, and some measure of these —in the wider sense—must flow into every soul that by faith establishes real contact with Him. There is no means of grace by which this contact is so much facilitated as the Holy Eucharist, for there we not only commemorate the death of Christ, but also feed our souls upon His life; the healing powers of the Saviour forgiving our sins and inspiring fortitude enter into us, and we are built up into better and stronger men and women.

There remains in the world a vast amount of suffering to be endured, since evil is far from being exterminated,

and it falls upon the good as well as upon the bad. S. Paul, who healed others, and had more faith than most of us, was afflicted with 'the thorn in the flesh.' He described it, be it noted, as 'a messenger of Satan' sent to buffet him, and in his second Epistle to the Corinthians, xii. 7, he implies that it was a result of the nervous strain involved in his conversion. Ever afterwards he appears to have been subject to recurrent seizures. He prayed definitely and repeatedly that he might be healed; but the disease was not removed, and the answer he received was: 'My grace is sufficient for thee; for my power is made perfect in weakness.' We observe that there was an answer, as there is indeed to every prayer; but it did not take the form of full restoration to health. That, however, did not disturb S. Paul's faith. He had what every Christian ought to have—sufficient assurance of the goodness and power of God to say with Job: 'Though he slay me, yet will I trust in Him' (xiii. 15). I have a cripple friend who in spite of fervent prayer remains a cripple; but when you see his radiant face, and hear his cheery words, and observe his amazing fortitude, you cannot doubt that there is an answer to his prayer. Whilst then we pray definitely that the sick may be healed, and expect the result we desire, we shall recognise God's answer in ways other than healing, *e.g.*, in the development of those eminently Christian qualities of patience and fortitude. (May one who has had experience of both tests say that the fortitude required in physical affliction or mental strain is not one whit less in degree or quality than that required in the 'firing line'?) S. Paul used his infirmity for the advancement of the Kingdom not only within himself, but also among others. Owing to one of those break-downs to which

he was liable, he once had to interrupt his journey in Galatia; but he bought up the opportunity and made many converts to the Lord. Although denied complete physical fitness, S. Paul, like many other good Christians, found the answer to his prayer in the measure of health that enabled him to be of service in the world, and in the richness of those qualities which his very infirmity was directed to enhance.

But there is also unimpeachable evidence attested by scientific as well as by religious observers that in many instances life has been protected or health restored in response to faith and prayer. In the absorbing account of Sadhu Sundar Singh presented by Canon Streeter and Mr. Appasamy there is a reliable story told how the Sadhu was once confronted by a crowd of people who came out with sticks and stones to attack him on a mountain in India. He closed his eyes, committed his soul to God, and prayed all night. Early next morning they returned without weapons and with great reverence. 'Last night,' they said, 'we came to kill you, but there were many people standing around you in shining robes! Who were they?' The Sadhu's answer was that they belong to Heaven, and are sent to work for those who bear witness to God. In his very helpful book 'Personal, Religion and Public Righteousness,' Canon Peter Green gives the following account: 'Some time ago a very old working woman died in a back street in Salford. Some time before she died she told me how, when she was about thirty-five, after having drunk very heavily for years, she took epileptic fits. These grew on her till she often had four or five a day. After six-and-twenty years of this affliction . . . she was converted under the ministry of the late Canon Hicks, afterwards Bishop of

Lincoln, and Captain Rowlands of the Church Army. That night in Barrow Street Mission Room she prayed, " O Lord, as Thou hast taken away the sin of my soul, take away the weakness of my body." After the meeting she walked home by herself, and never had the least symptom of a fit again.' Less dramatic but in essence no less significant is the steady recovery of health experienced by many a sick person who has made it the subject of earnest prayer. Such answers we treasure in our hearts without babbling about them. And here let it be said that auto-suggestion and its wonderful influence is not a suitable subject for the small talk of dinner-tables. It can never be understood or appreciated by detached and materially minded people who merely discuss it as they would a puzzle. Like religion it is a thing to be practised or to be left alone. Experience is the only key that will open its secret powers. ' If any man willeth to do his will, he shall know of the teaching whether it be true ' (S. John vii. 17). God is certainly using the agency of auto-suggestion to-day for conveying to faithful people the blessing of a brighter outlook and better health. If we let our thoughts dwell upon such statements as are gathered on the concluding page of this booklet, we shall rise from the contemplation with exalted vision, renewed hope, and fresh power.

JOY

A DELIGHTFUL story was told me yesterday by Christopher Hare, the well-known writer on side-lights of Italian history. Visiting the famous monastery of S. Bernard in Switzerland, he was escorted with several others by one of the monks. All were greatly impressed, and one pious but rather melancholy member of the party exclaimed: 'I wish I had "entered the religious life" when I was young!' 'It would not suit you, madam,' replied the monk. The lady was somewhat taken aback, and with a touch of indignation asked him to explain. 'Madam is not gay enough,' was the clever reply. No one could tolerate the disciplinary life of that isolated monastery without the perpetual spring of Christian joy welling up in his heart. The Christian ought to be the happiest person in the world. There is no other religion or theory of life so unstinted in its gifts, or so well adapted to the nature and needs of man. Is he conscience-stricken? 'If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, and He is the propitiation for our sins' (1 S. John ii. 1). Is he over-borne by perplexities? 'I can do all things through Christ who strengthened me' (Philippians iv. 13). Is he physically prostrated? 'Arise, take up thy bed and walk' (S. Mark ii. 9). *Or*, 'My grace is sufficient for thee, for my power is made perfect in weakness' (2 Corinthians xii. 9). Is he straining his eyes beyond the gate of death? 'I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth on me, though he die, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth on me shall never die' (S. John xi. 25–26). Is he longing to know what the future holds for him

and his loved ones? 'Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him' (1 Corinthians ii. 9). Thus from first to last, in every possible circumstance, the Christian religion sustains and guides us, and responds to every instinctive yearning of the human soul. The knowledge of this background of love which fills in every picture of human experience is an unfailing source of joy on life's journey. S. Paul might well say: 'Rejoice in the Lord alway: again I will say, Rejoice' (Philippians iv. 4).

Now, with these and many similar truths on our side we ought to be able to avoid the bane of over-anxiety. Our blessed Lord seems to have foreseen in us a tendency to worry, for He expressly warned us against it: 'Be not therefore anxious, saying What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? For your Heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first His Kingdom, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. Be not therefore anxious for the morrow: for the morrow shall be anxious for itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof' (S. Matthew vi. 31–34). The same teaching is implied in the prayer: 'Give us day by day our daily bread.' Commenting on this limitation to the present time, F. D. Maurice says: 'Have we found that anxiety about possible consequences increased the clearness of our judgment, made us wiser and braver in meeting the present, and arming ourselves for the future? If we had prayed for this day's bread and left the next to itself, if we had not drawn upon the future of its own troubles, we should have found a simplicity and honesty in our lives, a capacity for work, and enjoy-

ment in it, to which we are now for the most part strangers.' The very commonness of this tendency to be over-anxious, especially in these strenuous days, has blunted our sense of its culpability, and it is only when we are reminded of such sayings of our Lord's as I have just quoted that many of us realise how thoroughly unchristian it is to allow ourselves to be harassed by comparatively petty considerations. There are thousands of people who worry themselves into ailments, and fail to shake them off through sheer lack of confidence and composure. The Vice-Provost of Eton, Mr. Hugh Macnaughten, in his delightful little book, 'Emile Coué, the Man and his Work,' says: 'If we eat slowly, if we never worry, if we look on the bright side of things, if our thoughts are sane and wholesome, if we use the child-like formula which Coué suggests, then indeed we shall be happy children, and every day in every respect we shall be growing better and better. We are just to go on from strength to strength, always rejoicing, and never worrying about the morrow—perhaps we have read all this before in another book, but is it any the worse for that? Rather we may be thankful that M. Coué, working on his own lines, has reached very similar conclusions.'

It will be generally admitted in calm moments that the conditions which occasion worry and distress are almost always greatly exaggerated. We imagine ourselves in a heavy storm, whereas really there is only a breeze. Indeed, when we recall the obstacles which perhaps have been allowed to thwart us in the past, and glance at the whole situation, we are led to ask, Are difficulties real in the sense of being intrinsic and absolute? The very circumstances which constitute an insuperable barrier to one man are perfectly simple to another; and

this fact clearly indicates that much more depends upon personality than upon contingencies. The external condition matters little compared with the inward character. The supreme question in this connection is: What is our mental outlook? The philosophy of the Christian religion and of Emile Coué bids us lift up our hearts and trust that good will emerge. 'Fear not, only believe,' is a typical Christian exhortation; 'Optimism always and in spite of everything, even when events do not seem to justify it,' is no less typical of Emile Coué.

If we could make such maxims the ruling philosophy of our lives, how much better and happier we should be! A common complaint nowadays is sleeplessness, and in one way or another it generally arises from lack of that trustfulness and composure which are the heritage of those who, like little children, have developed in themselves the habit of simple confidence. In her book, 'Power through Repose,' Annie Payson Call urges that there should be an interval of light diversion between exacting mental work and going to bed; and that after lying down all the muscles should be relaxed, and all disturbing thoughts dropped. It is important to *assume* that we are going to sleep, or rather that sleep is coming to us, and if we whisper lazily the word 'sleep' with every breath emitted, we shall help to make the assumption actual. Many medical practitioners testify that not only insomnia, but also many physical ailments, are due to the wholly unnecessary strain we put upon our minds and nerves. A friend of mine, now prominent in the theatrical world, affirmed that a few years ago she developed blood-poisoning through sheer worry. Fortunately, she had the good sense to believe that if the

complaint could be produced by thought it could also be abolished by thought. And it was so. It must not be imagined that the strain is always heaviest on those who do most work. The general need is not less work, although that would be beneficial in some instances (just as its opposite would be equally beneficial in others!) but a better sense of proportion and more confidence; in short, and here we come to the vital remedy, we must ascend the heights of faith in God and in ourselves. There is a thrilling account of a flight by aeroplane in Mr. John Buchan's novel, 'Mr. Standfast.' The weather was perfect, the plane swift, and as Hannay skimmed along evenly 'in a stream of motionless ether' he felt the delight of soaring far above the fatigues of humanity, forgot his vexatious experiences, and thought nothing on earth could ever worry him again. We all would fain rise to such spiritual heights that we could master our circumstances and rejoice in the power of faith. But how is so great an achievement to be attained? Undoubtedly the proper training of our thoughts would go a long way to help us. However much we talk and act, there are frequent, if not long, spaces of silence in our lives every day. We have not yet fully appreciated the tremendous importance and practical result of what we think in those silences, but we are beginning to do so. 'The good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is good; and the evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth that which is evil; for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh' (S. Luke vi. 45). The thoughts we silently entertain tend to become part of us; they sink deep into the unconscious mind, and the unconscious mind is about as near as we have hitherto got to the kernel of personality.

Therefore in those quiet times we accumulate what our Lord describes as the treasure of the heart, we mould our character, and largely determine the quality of our subsequent words and actions. It is for that reason that I attach very great importance to the subjects for thought which I suggest in these pages.

Such contemplations inspire in us the right kind of confidence and help to make our conduct not unworthy of Christian discipleship. Think upon God and His attributes. He is revealed to us in the Bible, in history, and in nature as Goodness, Truth, and Beauty, King of the universe, and Father of humanity. He gave His Son to live and die on this earth 'that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.' He sends the Holy Spirit to guide and strengthen those who will receive Him. Thoughts like these constitute good treasure in our hearts; they are potent 'suggestions' of the highest order, and every day we do well to call them to mind. Thus do we cultivate joy in God, and this joy is supreme and eternal, and independent of mundane prosperity. There is a classic expression of this aspect of it in the poetry of one of the Minor Prophets:

> 'For though the fig-tree shall not blossom
> Neither shall fruit be in the vines;
> The labour of the olive shall fail,
> And the field shall yield no meat;
> The flock shall be cut off from the fold,
> And there shall be no herd in the stalls:
> *Yet I will rejoice in the Lord,*
> *I will joy in the God of my salvation.*'
>
> (*Habakkuk* iii. 17–18.)

We need also to let our thoughts dwell upon refined

and beautiful objects in the world around us. Good music, good literature, good pictures, the glories of nature, and wholesome recreation—these are channels by which the sunshine of God reaches our hearts in rays of joy. S. Paul showed his appreciation of the value of such thoughts when he wrote: 'Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honourable, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, *think* on these things' (Philippians iv. 8).

And just as God and things beautiful bring true and lasting joy, so also does the Christian character. It is a much more precious possession that a business man should have a clear conscience on the score of honesty when talking to a client than that he should have a big balance in his favour at the bank; it is a much greater thing for a parish priest to be trusted by his people as one who is utterly free from arrogance in attitude or duplicity in action than that he should attain to official dignities. True abiding joy belongs to the heart; it must not be confused with the lower pleasures pertaining to mere externals. The world cannot give us, and the world cannot take from us, the joy that accrues from being in the right relationship to God and our fellow-men (S. John xvi. 22).

Joy in God, joy in beauty, joy in character, will tend to promote the joy of physical health. It is the view not merely of a few faddists, but of sane and sound observers that the influence of mind upon matter is very great. The materialist of course may dismiss it off-hand on the ground that it is sheer mysticism and contrary to common sense. Men are apt to over-estimate what is generally

described as common sense. I agree with a fellow-Celt who said when we were discussing a public man who excels in the display of this quality: 'I like a man who *has* common sense, but I don't like a man who is full of it, for then he never makes a venture.' It is true that men full of common sense have the advantage of avoiding mistakes, for as John Galsworthy says somewhere in 'The Forsyte Saga,' you cannot very well fall off the floor; but they have also serious limitations. In a leading article in *The Times* on Ash Wednesday of this year there was this significant sentence: 'Common sense, the logic of the well-fed and prosperous animal, has never brought him to the higher verities.' If we raise our thoughts above mere materialism, we can hardly fail to see that the habit of rejoicing in healthy ideas does enormously enhance our chances of rejoicing in a healthy body. Wholesome suggestions in the mind tend to bring about wholesomeness in the flesh. Indeed suggestion to ourselves or auto-suggestion directed on Christian principles and inspired in a Christian atmosphere may prove to be the most beneficent force in the world. As a system it is in its infancy, and we are only catching glimpses of its physical, intellectual, and moral possibilities. We make no extravagant claims at this stage. Even the most fervent prayer and the most assiduous practice of auto-suggestion does not render medical attendance unnecessary, or altogether exempt one from illness, or prodigiously lengthen the span of life. But we do claim that the training of our thoughts in the ways here indicated will greatly help to produce a healthy body, a wholesome mind, and a beautiful character. Therefore I would pass on to every reader the good counsel of the Dean of Chester: 'Christianise

your Coué, and Coué your Christianity.' Thus will you grow in Christian joy and happiness, 'speaking one to another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart unto the Lord, giving thanks always for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father' (Ephesians v. 19, 20).

DAILY THOUGHTS FOR AUTO-SUGGESTION

TO BE DWELT UPON IN SIMPLE FAITH AND THEREFORE WITHOUT EFFORT. AFTER A WHILE YOU WILL HAVE CULTIVATED AN ATTITUDE WHICH WILL MAKE THE USE OF WORDS LARGELY UNNECESSARY

After waking in the morning whisper about twenty times :

Jesus, my Saviour, is making me well.

Before breakfast say to yourself :

I shall enjoy my meals, masticate the food well, and thoroughly digest it. My internal organs will operate naturally, and I shall be well and comfortable.

In the course of the morning repeat from time to time :

Throughout the day I shall be happy and well disposed, and in all circumstances patient and calm.

All my work I will do with pleasure and thereby serve God and my fellow-men.

In the course of the afternoon and evening at least once sit comfortably, close the eyes, and meditate thus :

' This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.'

I have faith in God, because He is the All-good and All-sovereign Lord of the world, and has manifested His love for me in Jesus Christ, Who cleanses my soul and heals my body.

I have faith in myself because the Holy Spirit is within me, and He will guide and strengthen me.

Between tea and bed-time say to yourself :

To-night I shall go to sleep soon after getting into bed ; I shall sleep soundly and continuously all night through ; and then wake rested and refreshed in the morning.

I have perfect confidence that by the power of God within me, I'm getting stronger in body, mind, and character, and will continue to do so until I'm thoroughly well and steadfast.

After getting into bed, repose comfortably, relax the muscles, close the eyes, and whisper twenty times as in the morning :

Jesus, my Saviour, is making me well.

Printed in England at THE BALLANTYNE PRESS
SPOTTISWOODE, BALLANTYNE & CO. LTD.
Colchester, London & Eton

KS-316-369